

by the novelty and the precision of this utterance was profound. When Japan attacked China in 1931 we stood aside. When we signed the Locarno pact we merely committed ourselves to a regional obligation. But here was a declaration without limitations of time or place. The Foreign Secretary was careful to add that we had no intention to act alone. "If the burden is to be borne, it must be borne collectively. If risks for peace are to be run, they must be run by all. The security of the many cannot be ensured solely by the efforts of a few, however powerful they may be." After his return he repeated his Geneva pledge in a written communication to Paris. These resonant declarations won us a fleeting moral leadership of Europe, and suggested the vitality of the League. It had always been realized that its testing-time would come when a European Great Power aggressed. There had been cogent geographical reasons for ignoring the challenge of Japan. Now at last it seemed as if the League was going to act, with England setting the pace.

It was a false dawn, for the British Government was much less valorous than it seemed. On the eve of his declaration at Geneva, Sir Samuel Hoare had a conversation with Laval, who afterwards revealed its character to the French Chamber. "We found ourselves instantly in agreement upon ruling out military sanctions, not adopting any measure of naval blockade, never contemplating the closure of the Suez Canal, in a word ruling out everything that might lead to war/* This decision, of course, had not been communicated to Mussolini, but it would have caused him no surprise; for he was sure of France, and England's notorious desire for peace convinced him that our bark was worse than our bite.

Ignoring threats and appeals he calmly completed his preparations, and his troops crossed the Abyssinian frontier on October 3 according to plan. Italy's aggression was promptly condemned by every other member of the Council, and the application of sanctions was voted by an overwhelming majority in the Assembly for the first time. The Committee appointed to work out details proposed the prohibition of loans and credits, an embargo on exports of war material to Italy, and an embargo on all Italian imports. Sir Samuel Hoare explained that on October 22 military sanctions formed no part of British policy and that only a boycott was envisaged. "Nobody in this House can believe that anybody in Europe desires a war." This ruled out not only military measures,